(b) if so, the reasons for such abolition and whether the States have been consulted in this regard;

(c) if so, what is the reaction of States;

(d) whether any alternative system is going to be proposed by the Ministry in this regard; and

(e) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (DR. MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI): (a) to (e) The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) and the Council for the Indian School Certificate Examination (CISCE), the two All India Boards, conduct Public Examination at class X and Class XII level. In the open schooling system, the National Open School examines and certifies the students registered with it, upto Senior Secondary Level. At present, there is no proposal under consideration of the Government to abolish these examination conducted by the CBSE, CISCE & the NOS. However, the National Curriculum Framework for School Education brought out by the NCERT in November, 2000 has recommended reduction of predominance of external examinations and removal of the 'Pass' and 'Fail' categories upto class X.

**Opposition of introduction of Astrology at University Level**

686. DR. MANMOHAN SINGH: Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether the UGC decided to introduce astrology as a subject for study in colleges and universities in India;

(b) the justification for this decision;

(c) the additional yearly allocation made by UGC for this purpose;

(d) whether Government are aware of the opposition by a significant section of scientific community to this decision of the UGC; and

(e) if so, what is Government's reaction thereto?

THE MINISTER OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (DR. MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI): (a) to (c) The University Grants Commission (UGC) has recently decided to introduce a number of Vocational, Innovative and General

courses. Jyotir Vigyan is one of such subjects where courses have been introduced in select universities leading to BA/BA(Hons.)/MA/Ph.D. degrees. Allocations for the above courses will be made by the UGC depending on requirements.

(d) and (e) The move to set up the above courses has attracted a mixed response. The UGC, as the custodian of higher education in the country, has endorsed the pursuit of such courses in the spirit of free inquiry into all aspects of knowledge in the holistic sense of the term.

**Vacant Posts of Teachers and Vice-Chancellors in Central Universities**

687. SHRI PARMESHWAR KUMAR AGARWLLA:
PROF. A. LAKSHMISAGAR:

Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that a large number of posts of teaching staff as well as Vice-Chancellors are lying vacant in several Central universities for a considerable period;

(b) if so, the details thereof, indicating the date from which these posts are lying vacant;

(c) what are the detailed reasons for not filling these posts;

(d) whether Search Committees for filling up these posts were constituted if so, whether the Search Committees have submitted the reports; and

(e) if so, the details thereof and by when these posts are likely to be filled up?

THE MINISTER OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (DR. MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI): (a) No, Sir. Out of the 17 Central Universities, the position of Vice-Chancellor in only three Central Universities *viz.* North Eastern Hill University, Assam University and Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar University is lying vacant. The appointment of teachers in Central Universities is a continuing process and all the Central Universities have already initiated actions in regard to appointment of teachers where there are vacancies.

(b) and (c) The posts of Vice-Chancellor in North Eastern Hill University, Assam University and Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar University are lying vacant.

(d) and (e) The Search Committees have already been constituted for them and processing of their recommendations where available have been initiated.